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May 6, 2004

BIO-TERRORISM FIELD EXERCISE TO BEGIN MAY 10, 2004

PHILADELPHIA – The Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Bio-terrorism Field Exercise will begin in the early morning hours of Monday, May 10th and continue for approximately 40 hours until the evening of Tuesday, May 11th.

During this exercise, the FBI will interview 65 to 70 victims exhibiting varying levels of symptoms related to exposure to a biological agent at 13 hospitals distributed throughout the five southeastern Pennsylvania counties. The results of these joint interviews should lead to field responses in at least two locations: a large public facility in Montgomery County at approximately 10:00 p.m. on May 10th and a large public facility in Philadelphia the morning of May 11th. We are withholding the locations in order to preserve the integrity of the exercise for its participants and to be able to accurately evaluate their response. You will be notified of the sites once the respective response efforts are underway.

There will be a media briefing at 4:00 p.m. on May 10th at FBI Regional Headquarters in Philadelphia to discuss the progress of the event. **We would ask that if at any time during these two days you receive reports from the public specific to the type of activity consistent with our exercise, that you call the Joint Information Center at 215-418-4281 to verify that the information is indeed the result of the exercise and not an actual emergency.**

This field exercise, which was developed by the Philadelphia Division of the FBI with the assistance of the United States Attorney's Office, will follow up on the general scenario which began at an October 24, 2003 tabletop exercise at the Montgomery County Fire Academy. The May 10th event will pick up the response efforts where the tabletop left off and will test and evaluate the regional response to the possible covert release of a biological agent in the five-county area.

This exercise is the culmination of a year-long training series focusing on preparedness for a bio-terrorism event. The program has included seminars, presentations and a variety of

tabletop exercises, all of which are part of a multi-layered strategy to assist in enhancing the region's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) preparedness.

Our partners, including law enforcement, emergency management, public health, fire departments, emergency responders, hospitals, private industry and others, will all participate in

this multi-county training event with the ultimate goal of assessing and improving the region's ability to coordinate joint operations in mobilizing a response to these hazards.

This will be the first exercise of its kind in the nation to task law enforcement and health department investigators with the simultaneous interviewing of suspected victims in hospitals. In addition, many of the agencies who have participated in prior training sessions will have the opportunity to test their own mobilization efforts and response protocols in the field.

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